

# THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF  
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS  
(Section of the Library Association)

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## The Library Assistant ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE Annual General Meeting of the Section will be held on Wednesday, 8th April, 1936, at Chaucer House. The programme for the day is as follows:

- 1.45 p.m. Assemble in Torrington Square, W.C.1 (near Chaucer House).
- 2 p.m. Coach tour of London.
- 4.15 p.m. Tea at Chaucer House.
- 5 p.m. Business Meeting and Presidential Address.

Members intending to be present for the coach tour, or tea, or both, must procure a ticket *before 3rd April*, from W. C. Pugsley, Branch Library, High Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford.

Members from the provinces will be the guests of the Central Association. Tickets for London members will be 2s. 6d. inclusive.

The next monthly meeting will be held jointly with the London and Home Counties Branch of the Library Association at the Warburg Institute, Thames House, Millbank, S.W.1, on 27th April, 1936, at 6.30 p.m. The Institute has been universally acclaimed as a valuable addition to the resources of English Scholarship, and the Library was described in the *L.A. Record*, August 1934. This will be the first opportunity librarians have had of paying it a visit, and it is hoped that there will be a good attendance to hear Dr. Gertrud Bing read a paper on the work of the Institute. The nearest Underground stations are Westminster and Lambeth North.

The Council, at its meeting on 4th March, received the notice from the Library Association to terminate the 1929 Agreement with that Association. It was decided to obtain authority from the members enabling the Council to negotiate and sign a new Agreement with the Library Association. This being a matter of a controversial nature, a ballot is being held in conformity with the Rules of the Association, and the result will be declared at the Annual General Meeting on 8th April. If any member has not yet received a ballot paper, he should apply *immediately* to Mr. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24. The closing date for the return of the ballot papers is 4th April.

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We have received a letter from the Hon. Secretary in which he says that his convalescence is progressing so well that he hopes to be able to attend the Annual Meeting. He greatly appreciated the many kind messages which he received, and has replied personally to as many as possible ; but, in case any have been overlooked, he asks us to assure the writers that the silence is not due to indifference or ingratitude.

### LONDON AND HOME COUNTIES BRANCH

*Worthing Conference : Alteration of Date.*—The week-end conference at Worthing will be held during the week-end, 25th to 27th September, and not on the date previously announced. Members are asked to make a note of this alteration on the programme of meetings circulated to them at the beginning of the winter.

The Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux (ASLIB) is to hold its Thirteenth Annual Conference at Balliol College, Oxford, during the week-end beginning Friday, 18th September, 1936. An attractive programme of lectures is being arranged. Particulars may be obtained from the Secretary of the Association, 16 Russell Square, London, W.C.1.

## SOME OPINIONS ON MODERN LIBRARY ORGANIZATION:<sup>1</sup>

W. A. MUNFORD

IT has always been one of the commonest fallacies of librarians to treat librarianship as if it existed in a kind of vacuum, entirely free from contact with the everyday world of men and women. This is probably due to the academic egg out of which the public library was hatched, and back into which some of us wish to push it, regardless of the obvious fact that, while egg into chicken is a straightforward natural process, chicken into egg is not so easy. It is one of the pervading arguments of this paper that we cannot even be in a position to discuss the subject of library organization without having a very clear conception of the society in which we are operating. Since such a conception can be based only partially on fact and much more on an individual

<sup>1</sup> A paper read before the Kent Library Guild at Maidstone, March 4th.

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interpretation of trends and tendencies, it follows that a plain statement by any one librarian is unlikely to meet with the wholehearted approval of others. In the light of this introduction I will proceed to sketch in such sociological detail as I believe to be relevant, and then present you with a theory of library organization applicable, in my view, to these conditions.

Ours is a proletarian civilization—that is to say, most of the people are largely propertyless and rely on others to employ them. The number of employers diminishes yearly with the development of trust and monopoly. Since many people shy at the word proletariat, as a hardened toper shies at a glass of water, I must point out that I use the word purely in the objective sense, and have not come here to discuss dialectical materialism or the materialist conception of history. I make the point, which may seem out of place in this perfectly respectable gathering in this charming old town, praised for its intellect by Defoe and, I am sure, even more praiseworthy to-day, not because the proletarian civilization is 100 per cent. different in fundamentals from the peasant proprietorship of, say, France, but because it involves a different emphasis and a different sense of values. It means that getting and keeping a job is the all-important thing in life. The whole life of a family revolves round the job, and all other activities have to be subordinated to it. Not merely this, but interest in other things is usually only possible as a passing and ephemeral thing, preferably of such a character that lack of concentration is compensated by abundance of sensation. Such tendency is accentuated by the rush and bustle inherent in mass production, the obverse of proletarianism. This sends home the breadwinners, tired out already, by methods of public transport which tire them out still more. Our age, accordingly, suffers from acute restlessness, aptly enlarged upon by Mr. S. P. B. Mais in a talk to the London and Home Counties Branch of the Library Association last June. There is no sadder sight, for the student of humanity, than a busy City Tube station between the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 a.m. or 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. on any weekday.

Take a day in the life of the ordinary English family. The father has to leave home for work early in the day, usually gets up later than he should, and performs in twenty minutes the routine processes of washing, shaving, dressing, breakfasting, looking at a newspaper, etc., which cannot be done satisfactorily in thrice the time. Hence frayed temper and disordered stomach. He rushes out to catch some form of public transport, usually sought by far too many others of his fellows, and goes to his work. This occupies him until a late hour of

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the afternoon, when the return home is made. Meanwhile his wife, who, if he is poor, has far too much work to do; if he is comfortably off, far too little, has performed those duties which are described—fantastically, my home adviser informs me—in our books on domestic economy. If you gather together the threads of the foregoing narrative, you will doubtless agree that the large sale of patent medicines and sensational newspapers, and the large incomes accruing to the exploiters of mass amusements, whether these be the provision of seats to watch the racing of a singularly emaciated type of dog, or road-houses for motorists whose cars are much more valuable than their brains, are not difficult to explain. Nor, at the other end of the scale, is the rather pathetic attempt to fit oneself into the eternal scheme of things by gardening or Oxford Groups. . . .

But now let me begin with "plain ordinary man," as he comes to the public library. The first contact of "plain ordinary man" with the public library occurs when, as a child, he joins the junior department, perhaps on the recommendation of his teacher, perhaps in company with a friend, sometimes because he has nothing better to do. Since it is only natural, in view of our reputation as a race of Empire builders, that more attention is paid to the development of the arms and legs than of the head, it is probable that he will come inadequately equipped, and without any clear idea even of the type of book which he requires. Since also the narrow life of his parents may have given them notions that library books are dirty (this is usually true), and carry infectious diseases (this is usually false), that he may be run over on the way (this is usually false), that he may mix with quite undesirable children (this is usually true), and that he may lose or allow the dog or baby to damage his book (this is usually true), there is a fairly good chance that he will not come at all. If he does come, then let him come to a junior library that is as bright and fresh as his home is dull, and be initiated into the wonderland in front of him by a lady who is as young, pleasant, and charming as his mother was before she married his father. Let him realize that the library is not a kind of extra school, accorded a kind of woolly approval by his teacher, but is wider and more important than all the schools in the world.

At fourteen, or perhaps a little later, if he attends a secondary school or has not found "beneficial" employment, this "plain ordinary child" will be removed from school and "go out into the world," that is, to the factory or office round the corner, to earn his living or as much of it as can be extracted from his employer. Since the pernicious idea that he will no longer need the

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library may have been instilled into him by parents or friends, on the basis that the wisdom of themselves is more beneficial than the wisdom of the ages, I think that the introduction to the adult library should be begun some time before school-leaving age. A selection of what, for want of a better phrase, I may call "intermediate books," should be available for him. These will normally be found in the lending library, but I see no reason why a similar batch should not also be found in the junior department, as an easy transition for the shy ones. Assume him transferred to the adult library, and it is now possible to draw up some basic principles of library organization.

If we can accept the principle that we must serve our readers by providing books to which they are naturally attracted, and slipping in others to which we feel their attention ought to be drawn, then we must agree that the main provision should be of those books which are likely to assist "plain ordinary man" in his own life, and others to help him to widen his interests, increase his sympathies, and develop his sense of justice and toleration, while improving his powers to penetrate the thick webs of ignorance, prejudice, and humbug which surround him. There is no doubt, in my own mind, that we still pay far too little attention to the man and his job. Since his life revolves round it, we are obviously not merely very thoughtless but very shortsighted, as we are dependent, for our very existence, on money voted by "plain ordinary man" or his elected representatives.

How many libraries really provide an adequate selection of technical books or make even the feeblest attempt to keep them up to date? How many librarians have ever attempted to obtain the vaguest knowledge of the various processes involved in the local industries, and have discovered how far printed literature can assist the operatives? How many librarians have made use of the wealth of specialist information available in trade literature and brought it to the attention of their readers? Very few, except in the large industrial areas. It is gratifying to know that technical and commercial libraries are regarded as prime necessities in these areas, but why are similar facilities, on a smaller scale, of course, not provided in the smaller towns? Since people cannot live by taking in each other's washing, every town is dependent, to a greater or less extent, upon industry, and it should be the natural function of the public library to provide the literature relevant. It is true that some industries now provide works' libraries of considerable dimensions, but these are seldom available to the mechanics and other manual workers who may wish to improve themselves.

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A school of thought which would restrict our activities to providing only the best literature has developed in our ranks over a period of years. While every librarian will ensure that his stock is as good as possible, all things considered, it has to be realized that the books demanded by many of our readers cannot satisfy the standards of good literature. Much of it, read openly by the public, and more discreetly by members of library staffs and committees, is not even literature, let alone good literature. But if we fail to supply it, those members of the public requiring it have no real incentive to avail themselves of our resources, and thus have no real interest in the library. This cannot fail to be a bad thing. Quite apart from any other consideration, the provision of it is only providing for our own future. In a democratic society a very satisfactory way of getting what one wants is to mix it with what Demos wants. I regard the provision of light fiction and miscellaneous works as a kind of premium on the library life-assurance policy. If we leave the commercial libraries, even those of the better type, to satisfy these needs, we also fail to provide opportunity for betterment. Every good librarian wants to induce his readers to read better books; the commercial librarian's responsibility is limited to his own pocket, however much, like Babbitt, he may harangue his fellows to the contrary. It was a basic principle of the classical economics, as expounded by Adam Smith and later writers, that, provided everybody looked after their own interests, an invisible hand guided everything for the best. While this theory was doubtless of considerable value to the clerics, in an age of scepticism, it has no possible relationship to the modern world. We have a social responsibility.

While ensuring that the needs of the better type of reader are adequately met, it is our task to provide an adequate supply of lighter literature. Two points here—firstly, that the percentage of fiction in stock is usually inadequate; I suggest 50 per cent. as a reasonable proportion for the average library. Secondly, that far too many librarians are loath to duplicate heavily, even where obviously desirable. Like the bachelor—they look but do not leap. A dozen copies of a very popular book are not too many for a library serving 40,000 people, half a dozen copies of the novels by standard modern writers, whose every new title is eagerly lapped up by a host of disciples, are obviously necessary. Since ours has always been a deadily dull calling of undoubted respectability, some of us dare not take risks. A modern poet has the following lines:

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*"Let us now praise famous men ;  
Not your earth shakers, not the dynamiters,  
But who, in the Home Counties or the Khyber,  
Trimming their nails to meet an ill wind,  
Facing the adversary in a clean collar,  
Justified the system."*

There is still too much clean-collar respectability about librarianship. I am not asking for a race of rakes, mark you. . . .

But this, you say, is all very well. Your ideas would cost money, and our committee growls if you even suggest an increase in the book-fund. Let sleeping dogs lie. I agree that it means more money. Most book-funds are still ridiculously low, both basically and relatively, when contrasted with the expenditure on buildings, maintenance, and overheads.

Let me suggest that librarians often have far too great a respect for bricks and mortar. I have not come here to criticize the new library at Manchester, but I know that many of the exclamations of approval which I heard during Conference week last year were due to wonderment at its enormous size and staggering height. A visitor might know nothing more about it than that, but that was sufficient. Doubtless the Egyptian dynasties responsible for those remarkable landmarks, the Pyramids, were actuated by such motives, but they had, at least, the justification that they were erecting architecture. There are very few libraries, ancient, modern, or *Tastie Gothique*, which can have any such justification. Carnegie was partially responsible for this, since the early grants were for buildings only. The great empty shells haunt many a quiet, sleepy old town. Many librarians have probably never opened a book on architecture, save to decide its final hiding-place in the ramifications of the Dewey classification.

It is generally recognized that, in the town of medium size, say with a central and about three branch libraries, it is not economical to provide more than a single reference department. I contend that this should also apply to the newsroom. Eliminating these two departments, we are left with the principle that the branch libraries are concerned primarily with home-reading. The inexpensive branch library of the one-room type has been developed during the last few years—you can find plenty of good plans and illustrations in the *Small libraries manual*—but I maintain that an adequate solution for many areas is the lock-up shop, planned on similar lines to the much-despised "Twopenny



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library." A shop branch of this kind has been recently opened by the Ilford libraries. A simple counter to take charging system, etc., wall shelving, and perhaps a small table for the convenience of readers is all the furniture required. The books would be arranged on the "ribbon" system, which has proved very satisfactory in use at Dover, in order to spread the fiction readers all round the room, and to ensure that nobody can easily ignore the non-fiction stock. A small room behind would serve as combined workroom, staffroom, and store. Half a dozen quick reference books and the telephone would suffice for reference purposes. The problem of overcrowding need not arise if the stock is always bright, clean, and up to date. The better the stock, the shorter time the reader tends to stay in the library, and the less the overcrowding. *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* could be taken if it were felt that the public might suffer without newspapers. One shilling and twopence a week for the best English journalism: the yellow press need not concern us.

I need say little more about central libraries, except that more attention needs to be paid to internal lay-out and less to classical façades and columns of the various Greek orders.

Most library assistants and all librarians are grossly underpaid for the work which they are called upon to perform. An urgent need is a uniform system of salary scales. But we can hardly expect, at present, to be considered apart from other local government officials, and, since the Hadow report was as amorphous as most Blue-books, we have still a long road in front of us. When nationalization comes—and it is with great self-denial that I propose to short-circuit this subject to-day—it will be a different story. . . . We need to pay particular attention to balanced recruitment between the sexes. I believe that a mixed staff is the best staff for all normal purposes and deplore the continued existence of 100 per cent. male or female staffs. There is nothing more harmful to the public library movement than the idea that the service can be maintained by a handful of female assistants. I think it is now usually accepted, among the still relatively small number of persons accustomed to use their heads for thinking rather than as raw material for the hairdresser, that the sexes are complementary and not competitive, or ought not to be in a community which claims, with doubtful justice, to be civilized. Equal salaries for equal work are essential, not merely as social justice, but to ensure that women do not secure the preference accorded to sweated labour. There is still more sweated labour in our profession than we like to think about.

Records are still far too cumbersome and numerous in many libraries.

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Neolithic readers' registers, methods of filing, stocktaking, and accessioning are still with us, and should find, instead, an honoured mausoleum in the Library Association museum of ancient and curious devices, the inauguration of which is an urgent need. But since a recent writer in the *Municipal Journal* appears to imagine that architects are still faced with the alternatives of indicator or open-access, it may be that I am a prophet and before my time. But I hope not.

Contacts with the public are still far too official, stilted, and formal. Many forms and blanks in use to-day belong to the age of the crinoline and not to the present century. Many of us confront our readers with notices which should be burnt by the public hangman and the librarian responsible with them. The fact is, of course, that we have not yet felt the full force of modern ideas in other than the very narrow sphere of pure library economy. Librarians must be citizens of the world, not denizens of the deep. How ridiculous it is that the poems of Mr. Day Lewis should be issued by an antiquated charging system, or that a repulsively printed overdue postcard identical with that used during the "Gay 'nineties" should demand the return of "The waves" or "Unit 1."

My final point and, in my view, the most important, is bound up with the question of the territorial organization of local government. I have argued elsewhere that there is much in favour of a replanned library service for London, under the control of the L.C.C. The case of the smaller and medium-sized provincial town is even more interesting. Each town has an area surrounding it, its hinterland, dependent upon it for employment, shopping facilities, and so on, the town itself being dependent on the hinterland for food supplies and other essential supply services. The development of such areas is conditioned largely by geography, physical and human; the local government areas, by reason of centuries of haphazard growth and the existence of vested interests, seldom correspond. It is only natural that the residents living within the geographic area but outside the local government area should desire the usual facilities from the local public library, although they make no rate contribution towards it. The normal progressive public library opens all but its home-reading services to everyone, restricting its lending service to those resident, rated, employed, or attending school within the local government area. Since funds are always limited, it would be unfair to its own readers to offer full service to those making less return for it. The result is that the surrounding area has to rely on a small county library service which, admirable though it may be, is not to be compared with the town service. It is difficult to suggest a solution

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outside a radical reorganization of local government areas, which is sadly overdue. But while Imperial administration can still ignore far broader geographical and additional anthropological considerations, it is quite obvious that much spade-work will have to be done. The recent report on Merthyr Tydvil is illustrative of the amazing capacity of the English for wearing blinkers in broad daylight.

I give this paper to you as a controversial exposition of some topics of library organization and await your comments. Much as we may differ in matters of detail, our common object is public service. Let me leave it at that.



## AN ASSISTANT'S DIARY

### "SCRIPTOR"

15th February.—This should be the busiest month of the year, but so far has proved just as slack as last month, which was below last year's figure. Chief thus wondering what will be the outcome of this continued decrease year after year, but assured him that he was by no means the only chief in the country faced with same problem. Myself believe that the decrease will continue so long as we refuse to be more up-to-date in our methods and policy. Pre-war dignity and principles will not bring the modern generation to us. There are far too many other matters of life in these days to contend with. We must attract people to us, not sit pompously behind our so often unattractive doors and upbraid the busy thousands hurrying by without a look. They will not trouble to come hunting for us until they are made to feel that they need us.

18th February.—Reference-library reader complained this afternoon that *Chambers's twentieth century* was not an up-to-date enough dictionary for him. Could not find some obscure word for his cross-word puzzle, and so lost a valuable prize! Had much ado to appease poor old gentleman's sense of grievance, and could not get out of a promise to draw chief's attention to the matter with a view to securing a later edition. Did not know that a new edition of *Chambers's* had been issued within last two or three years, and believe the man was but making a misstatement out of peevishness, though I stand open to correction.

21st February.—Had rather bad case this morning of guarantor making no effort to pay heavy fine for borrower removed from district, and two more borrowers making application with same guarantor. Having no index thereto (a shameful

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confession), deemed myself lucky to remember the particular case. So began to wonder about whole question of guarantors, remembering that 90 per cent. do not make good their guarantee when occasion arises. Which led me to conclusion that they have little or no value at all in practice, and may well be abolished, save for minors. This is already done to a great extent, as checking is done against Elector's Register, but most people imagine we require a guarantee in every case, regardless of age or position. So think that a more definite ruling and statement thereto should be made on application form.

22nd February.—Glad to see in this month's *L.A.R.* the revival of "Current views" columns, though the first contribution thereto seems a little unnecessary. Mr. Sydney would not agree, of course. But, after reading twice through his contribution in order to discover *something* of his meaning, fail to see the importance of his argument, or the real relevancy of the point in regard to our business. Now, Mr. Gardner's contribution I regard with some concern, for a proper guide to a choice of books is one of the fundamentals of our success, or otherwise.

2nd March.—Very busy to-day, which is a pleasant change. One of the busiest days of the year so far. No particular reason for it, however, which is one of the unaccountable things in our figures of late. There was a time, not so long ago, when almost each day's issue could be told beforehand, certain evenings always being busier than others. And so our time-sheet had been worked out accordingly. In these days, however, any night may be busy and any night may be slack, which often proves mighty inconvenient with regard to number of staff on duty. As may be said of more weightier matters, there is no accounting for the vagaries of public opinion. Is it, I wonder, just a psychological symptom of the lack of order and system of modern life?

5th March.—Read this day in the new *Assistant* of the *L.A.*'s dictum *re* amalgamation. Believe this to have been inevitable, and bound to have come soon in the interest of the status of the profession as a whole, though mighty sorry it had to come in this dictatorial fashion. Surely we have more assistants with greater concern for and insight into the future than has just been displayed! Let us hope that we shall be amply represented on the Council and elsewhere. Also, there has been much talk of the cessation of the *Assistant*, but I fail to see the necessity of this. Should very much value the opinions of others on this subject. Why cannot the *Assistant* be run as a separate journal still? Perhaps not in such an official guise, but in a modified form. If any have ideas about

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this, let it be known, so that we may be able to evolve an even more interesting magazine, entirely free from officialdom.

7th March.—Comes to me this evening an extremely interesting letter from South Africa, dealing with the differences between their system and ours. Mr. Editor has given me leave to take up more space this month, and encouraged me to say something about this letter at greater length, and am sure other assistants will be interested.

The letter is accompanied by an intriguing map (which I wish I could reproduce here) of Rhodesia, with whose libraries my correspondent deals. There are five libraries in Rhodesia, all in Southern Rhodesia, between Bulawayo and Salisbury, and they serve a population of 50,000 in a country as large as Ireland! They are not rate-supported, but subscription libraries, with grants from the Government and Municipality. Their whole outlook, from the nature of their system, is different from ours. It seems that they are a county library and municipal library rolled into one. Subscribers live as far away as Ndola, a place 800 miles away north up the railway, and Lobatsi, 450 miles south near Mafeking, besides some forty or so other villages dotted about this vast area. Some subscribers have to send 100 miles to the railhead for their little parcel of books, and transport varies between railway and native messenger. Would be interesting to know how many books have been lost during the last five years!

The Bulawayo Public Library has over 600 subscribers at £2 per annum each! A stock of 25,000 serves these enlightened readers. Town readers are allowed two books each; but only some 70 per cent. of their subscribers ever come to the library. Country readers are allowed eight to sixteen books, according to distance. A modest 200 is the daily average issue at Bulawayo, but, as my correspondent points out, this entails a great deal of work.

The letter goes on to tell of some of the problems they have in the work there, *à propos* of some of my notes here. With regard to my quotation from another correspondent, who deprecated the practice of allowing a junior assistant to give two books to a juvenile messenger, as it would in the end "defeat our aim of educating the public by means of the open-access system," they in Rhodesia are able to do this by just the opposite means. The assistant, in despatching books to far-away readers, is able, unless pronounced tastes have been stated, "to do a little gentle educating." One problem they have which I must quote. A subscriber requests, "When you send my eight books next month, will you send two cheerful stories about India for my mother, a book by

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Dickens or a similar author for my father, two detective stories for my wife, a book on big game for my brother, a book on economics for my assistant, and a good book on agriculture for me"! As the writer says, "A letter like that should put any assistant on his or her mettle."

Could go on longer about this letter, but think I have used sufficient space, Mr. Editor. At least, I hope I have given others a glimpse into Rhodesian library work. There may be scope for a full-blooded article at some future date, if Mr. Editor agrees.



## VALUATIONS

STANLEY HOLLIDAY

A CHEERFUL malignity, a sullen obtuseness, and a marprelarian mind are the personal characteristics necessary for the writer of "Valuations." He must spot confusion in unsuspected places. He must seize upon a library innocent alike of corruption and the worm, and under pretext of reviewing its publications, spit out his normal nastiness for the wicked amusement of a mob. But even this demon of discontent has a right to ask—What would make him purr, what soften, what praise? In short, can he find standards of criticism applicable equally to *Manchester* with a million-pound appropriation and to *Papcastle* with ninepence? He believes so. For if opulence implies magnificence in reports and bulletins—weight, embossings, cream-laid paper, half-tones—then poverty means brevity and an enforced absence of blah.

Take, for example, *Blyth's* annual report. A modest rag, cyclostyled—extraordinarily well cyclostyled—and produced in or near a district which is not suffering from financial superfluity. No one shall belabour *Blyth* for a lack of pretty types and borough arms. For here is a report written in crisp English prose, with amazing courage and honesty. Here is an authority that supports 15,000 borrowers, a central library, two branches, and school libraries on a £600 book-fund! And one will swear that the stock is as effective as means permit. A few extracts: "No limit is now imposed upon the issue of non-fiction tickets, and the result is appreciation without abuse . . . topical emergencies and demands were met with adequate supply . . . the works of the literary prizewinners of France, Germany, Italy, and Spain were added and well used." *Blyth* did not hesitate to rent ephemeral fiction from a com-

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mercial library, and so save its book-fund for wholly necessary works. To those not unacquainted with the idle and offhand expenditure of a few hundreds on mid-month requisitions, the report appears as an excellent instance of the old fighting spirit that has at least given us minty chairs and club teas at Chaucer House.

However, we stray from standards of criticism. There *is* a common basis for discussing *dives et pauper*, but there are preliminary factors to be considered. First let us be heretical. Is library advertising as represented by the printed word a hundred per cent. worth while? Certainly not. Each year scores of libraries issue thousands of lists which are duly taken by the public. They make satisfactory bookmarks and excellent spills. True, intelligent borrowers will profit by the study of lists and guides, yet the measure of their use is utterly obscured by the howl of triumph the librarian is wont to emit when a reader is seen to be making direct reference to the shelves with the aid of the former's little paper child. A hasty generalization as to its popularity and usefulness is presented at the next committee meeting, and so further funds are sanctioned for publications. But the reviewer will see beneath the surface. He will feel it his right to receive lists of real merit as to typography, selection, and arrangement, and the "poorer" the library so will he advance his standard of merit on the basis of comparative results for an equal outlay with wealthier institutions.

Now *Rugby*, with "New books," passes through the needle's eye. A librarian with a sense of layout has ably demonstrated that it does not need a special type to produce a page of pleasing appearance. A reasonable criticism of this list is that a fair proportion of the books included are not quite recent. (Not that this matters unduly.) And here are monthly lists from *Finchley* and *Lowestoft*, very brief, very neat, very attractive. One cannot see why *Finchley* finds it necessary to call attention to new works by Ethel Mannin, Denis Wheatley, and Dornford Yates, but otherwise there are various evidences to show that the book-selection is up-to-the-minute and well-informed. *Lowestoft* seems to have fallen down again on a crazy alphabetical arrangement—business, chiropody, clocks and watches, cosmetics, cycling, diesel engines—a combination of ideas reminiscent of Moostapha Pasha's verbal fireworks in "Eöthen." *Fulham's* first list this year is drab. A hideous green paper seems to have absorbed the print into itself, so that the reader feels no inclination to scan the almost invisible contents. December's canary colour has been abandoned with great loss of legibility and visual attraction. Nor is the salmon-pink and general

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spottiness of "The Readers' guide" from *Halifax* wholly interesting. Its editorial attacks and extinguishes in effective fashion the perennial damp squib concerning the iniquities of "free" libraries; but there are two points to be noted. It is some way amusing that *Halifax* has found it necessary to establish a ladies' room: that it should have to announce in stately fashion and give a lengthy blurb to "Whitaker's Almanack" is astounding!

Yet before criticism becomes valid there is a further consideration to be borne in mind. And that was foreshadowed in a phrase above, "results for outlay." What results do librarians demand of their publications? And what are the essential and differing purposes of the latter? We shall not mistakenly assess a drive for circulation on a scale similar to that required for select brochures which seek to inculcate a nice literary discrimination. But we might fall heavily on monthly bulletins—and there are not a few—that retail third-hand gossip about novelists, or cannot be distinguished in make-up or contents from sales catalogues. Then again, separately, are the handbooks on the lines of readers' aids, such as the second edition of *Bath's* "Hand list of quick reference books." This is a non-committal and useful work. It appears to contain an element of misplaced enthusiasm by including Du Cange, the Oxford Studies edited by Vinogradoff, and Thompson's "Introduction to palæography," yet there is no doubt that it would find favour in the eyes of Mr. Seymour Smith.

*Sheffield's* "Sir Owen Seaman and the English parodists" is an issue-pusher. The list is appropriate and well-conceived, and perhaps it is ribald to have hoped for the inclusion of "1066 and all that" and "You have been warned" beside Swinburne, Pope, and Calverley. "More books," the monthly journal from *Boston*, is a titan, a colossus, compared with *Sheffield's* airy offspring. Its portentous mien conceals contents as informative and as serious as ever. Early English Bibles, the etchings of Whistler—it is a triumph of weight and wisdom. And to the lewd and carping eye "Odi profanum . . ." stands writ at the head of every page.

If it is well to analyse library publications into their different kinds, it is nevertheless a fact that the majority are similar and stereotyped, and proceed along a comfortable level of mediocrity. Among a selection of six typical bulletins, five are almost exactly the same size, "The Fordwick," a quarterly list from *Brentford and Chiswick*, being a punier representative. "The Fordwick" was run upon a newspaper press, and probably served its purpose. Its contents are clear and sufficient, but it is not commendable. The *Burton-upon-*



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*Trent "Bulletin"* and the *Cheltenham "Quarterly"* disappear beneath a welter of advertisements. The "Bulletin" gives a lengthy bibliography on the circus, but most of its contents are not contained in the library. Curious publicity! "Good company" from *Newark*, the "Library journal" from *Burnley*, and *Chesterfield's* "Bookshelf," despite certain separate features, might be triplets. *Newark* is eager, and one believes able, to give service; the "Library journal" contains a very readable article by Robert Herring on "The Ballet"; while *Chesterfield* permits the appearance of a surpassingly smug confession of "What the library means to me, by a reader." But everywhere the page, the annotations, the conception, is uninspired. One glances along and begins to wonder if class marks and allocation letters serve anything but a theoretical purpose.

This month's *Leviathan* comes from *Dorset County Library*. Four hundred and seventy-four pages hold the contents of the non-fiction stock at Dorchester. When one realizes that Mr. Elliott is the solitary professional on the *Dorset* staff, that figure itself gives some indication of his toil. His catalogue suffers from what F. M. G. calls "the hieroglyphics of annotation" with *bibs.* and *ill. notes*, but it would be discourteous other than to praise the faith that permitted such labour. But the cautious enquiry must be made—was it all worth while? Would not *Dorset* have received more benefit by the publication of select lists after the fashion of *East Sussex*? Mr. Elliott is the best judge of that.



## LIBRARY SERVICE AND THE LOCALITY

R. L. W. COLLISON

PROGRESS in public library service since the war, and more especially during the last five years, has tended towards co-ordination and greater co-operation. Much of this can be attributed to the influence of the Local Government Act of 1929, which has replaced many a small authority by the County Council, and has in other cases welded two or three communities into one. In a number of these instances it would appear to an observer that local conditions have been, if not ignored, at least insufficiently taken into account—in a few, it would seem that they have been sacrificed for experi-

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mental purposes. It is the aim of the present writer to contend that public interests and public economy are in danger of becoming confused, and that in public library service in particular, the interests of the public may possibly, in spite of their paramount importance, take second place to efficiency and organization.

To-day, when the word "co-operation" is on the lips of every economist, it may be considered not only retrograde, but even ridiculous, to point out that localities are best served by themselves. At long last, with the centenary of local government in 1935, historians have brought to the public's notice the essentially "local" character of administration in England, and have at the same time pointed out that the Local Government Act of 1929 is cancelling the spirit of the first municipal Act of 1835, in transferring the powers of smaller units of a county to the larger towns or to the county itself. This, the reader may say, is inevitable; progress demands economy of administration. But from the librarian's point of view, this "progress" may belie its name.

Where a district or separate community has formed itself round the nucleus of a village or small town, interests peculiar to that town are automatically formed. Thus the character of Letchworth may be said to be totally different from that of Welwyn, although the two towns are within the same county. A library serving such a town will form stock, relations, and reading public not wholly similar to those of the library of any other town. In the interests of the town, it would seem that its public library should be autonomous. And lest this article should be assumed to be an attack on county libraries, it is necessary to point out that at the present time a number of districts (boroughs and urban districts) have been formed from two or even three towns with villages and farmland in between these, thus involving a number of varied interests under the same authority. If the public library of the town is controlled by a higher authority, be it county or municipal, the librarian must sooner or later find that his efforts to serve the town must give way to the interests of the wider region of which the town is part. The library authority will tend to give the town what is just in comparison with other districts under its control, and the town will continue to press its demands, which, to the authority, are rendered lifeless owing to the equal consideration which is given to all districts.

In such a case, in spite of the fact that economy is effected by unification under one authority, "absolute" economy is not brought about owing to the tendency for the work with which this authority has to deal, to become too great for adequate treatment. One has only to consider the amount of time

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required by a Government office to sanction any application of a local authority, to be aware of this difficulty. In this connexion, the peculiar difficulties of nationalization may also be pointed out, should a libraries department be tacked on to an already overworked Board of Education.

Although the issue in question is service to the public, the psychological aspect, as it affects the librarian, cannot be left untouched, since it is to him that the quality of the library service is finally due. A librarian directing the library service of a town, but subordinate to a larger authority, may find it difficult to do his utmost for the community, when he is not in entire agreement with the aims of the library authority whose servant he is, or when his efforts are nullified by the indifference of that authority. An inspector or superintendent of branches may help to remedy this, but the only cure is the autonomy of the library service of the town. For practical purposes, it is therefore suggested that any town that has over 20,000 population, and maintains two or three cinemas, several banks and a number of churches, besides a good shopping centre, can surely afford to maintain a well-equipped public library as part of the essential services of the town.

Sufficient collaboration has already been reached by means of the National Central Library and the various Regional Bureaux to assure that, by such a scheme, the public will not suffer. "Ribbon" development, the areas below 20,000 population and scattered villages, are best served by regional branches of the county library. At the same time, these are not adequate substitutes, but the best that the economic difficulties of the times will allow. Co-operation, the ideal of modern years, and one of the greatest aids to the public library service, must be promoted only so far as it serves the public, and administration must be servant to the ultimate aims of librarianship.

## COUNCIL NOTES

THE serious situation, created by the receipt of the requisite twelve months' notice from the L.A. to terminate the 1929 Agreement, occupied most of the Council's time and attention at its meeting on 4th March. After long discussion, it was decided to ask the members by ballot for plenary powers to negotiate and sign the best agreement possible under the altered circumstances. In determining the Agenda for the Annual

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General Meeting, the Council resolved that the announcement of the result of the ballot should be an item, so ballot papers should be already in members' hands by the time this report appears (see Announcements this month). The Council endorsed the arrangements for the Annual General Meeting, and the Financial Statements for 1935, the Hon. Auditors' Report on the Accounts for that year, and the Annual Report were approved.

The Education Committee reported that only 51 students had entered for the May examination Revision Courses, a decrease of nearly 50 per cent. compared with 1935. It seems obvious that the decrease is attributable to the delay in announcing the results of the December examinations. At the risk of causing inconvenience to the Tutors, the final day for receiving entries for these courses was extended by two days, but many applications received after 22nd February had to be refused. It was decided to send a resolution to the L.A. Education Committee, asking for a review of the examination organization, with a view to results being communicated to students by 8th February for the December examinations, and by 8th July for those in May.

On the subject of the proposed Essex Library Guild, the Council decided that, while it was in sympathy with the project, it could not afford it recognition at the present juncture.



## OUR LIBRARY

*Books for youth : a classified and annotated guide for young readers. Edited by W. C. Berwick Sayers. (The Library Association, 10s. ; to members, 9s.)*

THE new edition of *Books to read* makes a welcome appearance under a new and more appropriate title, for it is now over five years since the publication of the first edition. It was the intention of the Library Association to keep *Books to read* up-to-date by the publication of annual supplements, but it was found possible to issue only one of these, in 1932. The work of revision therefore has been somewhat arduous, and Mr. Sayers is to be congratulated on the speed with which he has been able to carry it out since he took over the editorship last year. It is to be hoped, however, that the intention to issue annual supplements has now been abandoned. This may seem a little ungenerous, but I have yet to meet the librarian with any great love for supplementary volumes. Moreover, it may be doubted whether current books are of such importance to a list of this character that

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they cannot await inclusion in a later edition. A new edition of the whole work every three or four years would undoubtedly be more satisfactory in every way.

This edition includes books published up to June 1935. The arrangement follows that of the earlier edition, books being listed in the order of the Dewey Classification and numbered progressively. A very full index ensures quick and easy reference to any part of the volume. There is one practice which I hope will be discontinued in the next edition. Some important books are noted only in annotations to other books, and there is consequently a danger that they will be overlooked, even though they are indexed. On looking through the section on the Great War I missed Liddell Hart's *History*, to find it later in the annotation to Carey and Scott's *Outline history*. These books should surely receive full entries even at the expense of enlarging the work a little.

The difficulty of selecting books for young people in their teens is one which will be appreciated by all librarians, and Mr. Sayers in his preface modestly confesses his doubts that he will have satisfied everybody. "In this range of ages," he tells us in his preface, "every intellectual level can be found, from the child who has not mastered more than single-word reading to the boy or girl who can read almost abstruse technical works." The selection here represents an attempt to steer a middle course between these extremes, and on the whole it succeeds admirably, although it seems strange to see Pater, Peacock, and Smollett rubbing shoulders with such obvious juvenile writers as Brereton, Brazil, Strang, and Westerman, and to find Marshall's *Elements of economics of industry* in the same section as *Pollycon*. It is patent that the user of this guide (and it is intended for the use not only of librarians, but of club leaders, parents, and teachers) must exercise considerable discrimination in selecting books from it.

Bearing in mind the scope of the work, it reveals very few obvious omissions. Although I have made no systematic check, a few tests at random bore testimony to the comprehensiveness of the selection. I should have thought, though, that the excellent *Shown to the children*, *How-and-why*, and *Tales of action* series merited inclusion, and I missed among others Wells's *Work, wealth, and happiness of mankind*, Peter Fleming's *Brazilian adventure*, Belloc's *Economics for Helen*, and Kingsley's *Madam How and Lady Why*, all books which I should have thought fell within the limits of this selection. The section on foreign languages seems rather thin, and none of the numerous books published in recent years on the film appears to be noted. The fiction selection has been done

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with great care and judgment, and consists in the main of the standard books one would expect to find in a list of this sort. There is a sprinkling of recent novels, the selection of which can only be described as arbitrary. Some judicious pruning of out-of-date novelists would improve the selection. I cannot imagine modern youth clamouring for the works of Sir Walter Besant, Miss Braddon, Edna Lyall, Sir Gilbert Parker, Mrs. Humphry Ward, or Mrs. Henry Wood. Why not let these books sink peacefully into the oblivion to which they now belong? Some of the standard authors, too, are over-represented. Six of Charles Reade's novels, for example, are listed; he would be quite adequately represented by *The Cloister and the hearth* and *It is never too late to mend*. Anthony Hope, George Eliot, Charles Kingsley, Frederick Marryat, and Charlotte Yonge are others who would bear similar treatment.

These, however, are but minor criticisms, and the book as a whole, which has proved in its earlier edition to be one of the most useful publishing enterprises of the Library Association, reflects the greatest credit on the editor and his staff. It deserves, and will no doubt have, a bumping sale.

J. T. G.

## THE DIVISIONS

### MIDLAND DIVISION

A MEETING of the Library Association, Birmingham and District Branch, and the Midland Division of the Association of Assistant Librarians, was held at Kidderminster on Wednesday, 12th February, 1936, by kind invitation of the Chairman (Alderman R. S. Brinton, J.P.) and members of the Kidderminster Library and Museum Committee. Councillor G. S. Tomkinson, O.B.E., M.C., the well-known authority on fine printing, had arranged an Exhibition of Modern Fine Printing in the Art Gallery. Members had an opportunity afterwards of inspecting the Kidderminster Public Library, which has recently been entirely reorganized.

Members were officially welcomed by the Worshipful the Mayor (Councillor Miss E. C. Addenbrooke, J.P.), and entertained to tea by kind invitation of the Chairman (Alderman R. S. Brinton, J.P.) and Vice-Chairman (Councillor E. G. Eddy, M.B.E., J.P.) of the Library and Museum Committee.

After tea the Junior Meeting was held in the Museum. The Chair was occupied by Mr. F. N. Reed, of the Wolverhampton Public Libraries, and a

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paper, entitled, "Some staff problems from the assistant's point of view," was read by Mr. R. W. Bowdler, F.L.A., Chief Assistant, Kidderminster Public Library.

The Library Association Meeting followed. Owing to the absence of the Chairman, Mr. H. M. Cashmore, F.L.A., City Librarian, Birmingham, the Chair was occupied by Mr. H. Woodbine, Chairman of the Birmingham and District Branch. Unfortunately, Councillor G. S. Tomkinson, O.B.E., M.C., who was to have read a paper on "Modern fine-printed books," was prevented from being present owing to illness. His paper was read by Mr. A. E. Turner, Borough Librarian and Curator. This was followed by Mr. Turner's own paper on "The Kidderminster library reorganization." Both papers were of great interest, and provided ample material for thought. The meeting closed with votes of thanks to all those who had contributed to the success of what had been a very enjoyable visit to Kidderminster.

### SOUTH WALES AND MONMOUTHSHIRE DIVISION

A highly successful meeting took place at Llanelly on 12th February. On arriving by motor-coach the members visited the tinplate works of Messrs. Richard Thomas, under the guidance of Mr. J. Griffiths, a member of the Llanelly Public Library Committee. Tea, very kindly provided by the Mayor, followed at the Stepney Hotel, and the members were cordially welcomed by Mr. E. Willis Jones and Mr. Hughes, as the Mayor was unable to be present. The Hon. Secretary and Mr. W. S. Phillips moved a vote of thanks to the Mayor and those connected with the reception. On visiting the library, to which Mr. J. E. Thomas, late of the Cardiff staff, has been recently appointed Librarian, the members were impressed by the admirable building housing a well-arranged library.

Opening the meeting, the Chairman, Mr. E. Sellick, made a presentation to Mr. J. E. Thomas of a clock. This clock was a gift from his old colleagues of the Cardiff Public Library. The main item of the meeting, an address by Mr. R. D. Hilton Smith, Librarian of Deptford, followed immediately afterwards. Mr. Smith spoke on "Things seen in America," an account of his observations on his 1933 visit to the A.L.A. Conference and the leading American Libraries. It was an intensely interesting account, and brought forward a number of keen questions in the subsequent discussion. Mr. A. E. Sleight proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Smith for the address and also

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to the Llanelly Libraries Committee for facilities for the meeting. This proposal was ably seconded by Mr. K. Davies and carried with acclaim.

### YORKSHIRE DIVISION

The Annual Meeting of the Division was held at Bradford on 22nd January. It was well attended, about 90 members assembling at the Central Public Library, Darley Street, where Mr. W. H. Barraclough, City Librarian, extended a welcome and conducted the party round the various departments of the Central Building. After viewing the Central Library the party divided into two groups: the first group under the guidance of Mr. Barraclough visited four of the Branch libraries, and the second group under the leadership of Mr. W. R. Parsons visited the Bolling Hall Museum. The party re-formed at the Mechanics' Institute, where they were entertained to tea by the Bradford Public Libraries Committee.

In welcoming the members the Chairman (Mr. Councillor T. I. Clough) paid tribute to the work done by the Bradford Public Libraries and by the library movement generally. The thanks of the Division were adequately expressed by the President (Mr. H. W. Marr).

Then followed the Annual Business Meeting. The officers and committee for the ensuing year were announced as follows: *President*: Mr. J. T. Gillett, F.L.A. (Leeds). *Vice-Presidents*: Miss E. F. Wragg (West Riding County), Messrs. Frank Haigh (Halifax), H. W. Marr (Sheffield), G. W. Strother (Leeds). *Hon. Treasurer*: Mr. W. Procter (Leeds). *Hon. Secretary*: Mr. S. A. Firth (Sheffield). *Committee*: Miss D. Hancock, F.L.A. (Sheffield), Miss M. Heap (Keighley), Miss L. Wray (Leeds), Messrs. H. Batson (Leeds), J. Bebbington, F.L.A. (Leeds), C. Bennett, F.L.A. (Huddersfield), F. Broadhurst (Sheffield), F. E. Cronshaw, F.L.A. (Sheffield), R. F. Drewery, F.L.A. (Hull), H. H. Howarth (Scarborough), T. J. Kirkpatrick, F.L.A. (Bradford), F. W. Smith, F.L.A. (Dewsbury). *Hon. Auditors*: Messrs. E. Thompson and G. E. Trowsdale (Leeds).

After the Annual Report and Financial Statement had been passed, thanks were tendered to the retiring officers and committee. The President (Mr. J. T. Gillett, F.L.A.) called upon Mr. Lionel R. McColvin, F.L.A. (Hon. Secretary of the Library Association), to deliver his address, "The Library Association," in which he reviewed the Association and its work from its foundation. He covered the ground thoroughly, giving an account of the early meetings and the controversial subjects which were discussed. An



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animated discussion ensued to which Mr. McColvin replied. The meeting concluded with votes of thanks to the speaker for his address and to Mr. Barraclough and his staff for arranging an interesting and successful meeting.

### NEW MEMBERS

**CENTRAL.**—Ashley F. Carter (National Sunday School Union); L. Kilbey (Bethnal Green); Miss N. R. Morgan (Essex County, Chelmsford);

Miss M. Preston (Finsbury); H. F. Richards (University College, Medical Sciences Library); G. K. Scott (Coulsdon and Purley); E. Smythe (Edmonton); Allan J. Ward (Southall); Miss D. Cave (Nottingham); S. W. C. Cook (Hertford County); Edward McDiarmid (Paddington); Miss V. Pepper, Miss M. Seeds (Nottingham); Daphne Tennant (Worthing); Miriam H. Copeling (Kent County, Ashford); Lucy E. Howlett (Croydon); Ellen Hadfield (Devon County, Barnstaple); Edward R. Denham (Seely County Library, I.O.W.).

**Eastern.**—Miss A. K. Cowles, Miss G. M. Hooper, Miss E. C. Woods (Ipswich).

**Midland.**—J. J. Graneek (University Library, Birmingham); A. L. Bassett, Miss B. K. Bradley (Leicester); Miss J. B. Roberts (Oldbury); C. B. Lander (University Library, Edgbaston, Birmingham); Nora M. Fisher (Derby County, Derby); P. Hepworth (Leicester).

**North-Eastern.**—Miss J. G. Scurfield (Sunderland).

**North-Western.**—Barbara M. Taylor (Bury); Jean Moore (Rusholme Library, Manchester).

**South-Eastern.**—Joan M. Cleaver (Bognor Regis); John T. White (Margate); Daphne J. Hooker (Kent County, Deal).

**South Wales.**—Miss B. J. Archard (Penarth); Melba R. Cratchley (Cardiff).

**South-Western.**—Marie F. Rushton (Portsmouth); W. A. Grimsdale, E. C. Burdett, Stanley B. Sims (Bournemouth); P. E. D. Allum (Poole); Miss J. Hankins, Miss K. N. Chadd, Miss M. Wild (Portsmouth); Miss K. J. Roxburgh.

**Yorkshire.**—Donald Barnett (Bradford); Leslie Worth (Leeds); E. Gorman, Miss A. Shepherd, B.A., Moss I. Thornby, G. T. Todd (Bradford); D. Bateman, S. T. Dibnah (Hull); Douglas Fernyhough (Leeds); Arthur E. Mimmack (Gainsborough); James Green (Skipton).

## The Library Assistant CORRESPONDENCE

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THE EDITOR,  
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

SIR,—

As one who has "climbed comfortably up the sectional ladder," I am in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed by Mr. James in February's issue of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

Some months ago I was forwarded a draft of the new syllabus by the Education Committee of the A.A.L. and asked for my opinions. My reply was strangely similar in content to the published letter. I stressed the great increase in the standard and scope of the proposed syllabus and suggested the future adoption of the letters D.L.A., with the provision that existing "F.L.A.'s" could, if they wished, qualify for the premier diploma by submitting an approved thesis, passing an additional examination or whatnot.

Some such distinction seems to be imperative, and yet, would not "F.L.A. (1938-)" speak emphatically for itself?

Yours faithfully,

W. HOWARD PHILLIPS.

PUBLIC LIBRARY, HOUNSLOW.

7th March, 1936.

THE EDITOR,  
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

SIR,—

My attention has been drawn to the concluding paragraph of the contribution entitled "Valuations" by Stanley Holliday, which appears in the March issue of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT. The paragraph reads as follows:

"A final word. One hopes for the good of the profession that the howler on page 5 of the *Heston-Isleworth* report was corrected as publicly as possible!"

I am never averse to criticism, providing it is fair, and that it observes the courtesies of everyday life, but I do believe in moderation in all things, and I am firmly of the opinion that Mr. Holliday should have stated what the

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"howler" (*sic*) was, and thus given your readers an opportunity of judging for themselves whether it really *was* a "howler" or whether he had *entirely* missed my implication.

After asking several of my professional colleagues if they could find the "howler," and their replies being in the negative, I was obliged to ask Mr. Holliday himself, who informed me that the sentence which called forth such scathing criticism ran as follows:

"I regret to have to announce an increase of 94 in the issue of books to the patients in the Hounslow Hospital."

Yours faithfully,

H. GROOM,  
Borough Librarian.

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